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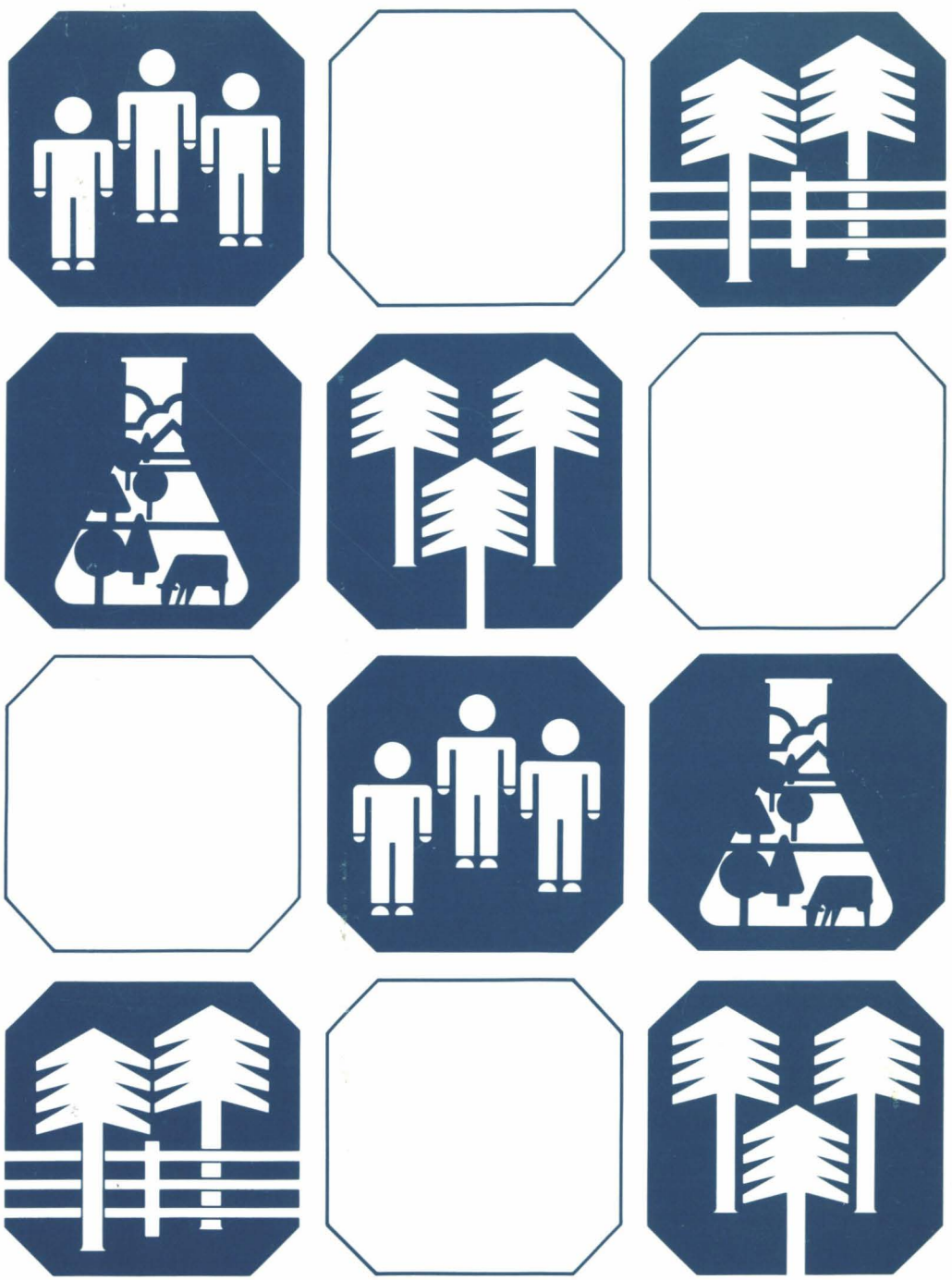
From Challenge to Opportunity

The Forest Service in 1983



From Challenge To Opportunity

A String of Opportunities — In recent years, the Forest Service has successfully met the challenge of finding ways to manage its programs more efficiently and effectively. The agency has learned to manage change in ways that enable it to continue to provide the public with a high quality of service.

However, in 1983[1], rather than continue to view restrictions, such as tight budgets, as challenges, the Forest Service was determined to adopt another perspective — to view them as opportunities to test even more creative approaches to programs. In adopting this management view, the Forest Service opened the door to innovation for the future. Imagination became the key ingredient for developing programs and policies to administer the Forest Service.

The result was a Servicewide effort to intensify emphasis on innovation and creativity to further improve management effectiveness. This report highlights the progress made along this course by the Forest Service in administration, resource management, planning, State and private forestry, research, and voluntarism.

Administration

A critical element in the efficient administration of all Forest Service operations is cost-effectiveness. The Forest Service has always striven for efficiency. Moreover, in 1983, several additional ways were found to tighten operation. Three of the most promising were mobilization of productivity improvement teams, installation of an electronic data and communications network, and cooperation with an Administration effort called "Reform 88."

Productivity improvement teams (PIT), composed of Forest Service employees with expertise in the selected study areas, dissected Forest Service programs. They looked at ways to eliminate unnecessary complications and paperwork and to save money. Their recommendations, when implemented, will affect the entire agency through improvements in procedures and subsequent improvements in productivity.

In 1983, teams looked at and made recommendations on timber sales procedures, reforestation, technological improvements, and contracting/purchasing. The potential annual savings and revenue increases resulting from these areas were estimated at $74.5 million.

A new computerized data and communications system currently being installed also was designed to increase employee efficiency and cut costs. Data General Corp. of Westboro, Mass., was awarded a contract in 1983 that provides for computer acquisition, maintenance, training, documentation, and technical support. By the end of the year, minicomputers were being installed in Forest Service offices across the country.

From the Washington Office to the Ranger District, the agency will have the same equipment, enabling the quick storage and transfer of information. One great advantage is that operational skills and application programs will be interchangeable among units without the need to retrain personnel or convert to different equipment and systems. Also, for the first time, significant data processing and information handling capabilities will be available at the field level.

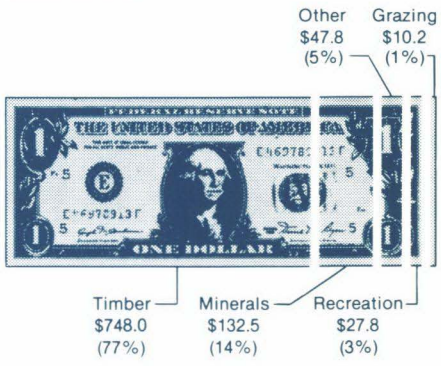
These actions fit neatly into Reform 88, the President's plan for a major reorganization of the Federal Government management process to insure greater efficiency. This plan concentrates on developing a standard accounting and reporting system for Federal agencies, integrating Government computer systems so they can exchange data readily, and cutting Federal paperwork and internal agency regulations.

Some of the suggestions and ideas that have come from this program were already being used in 1983. Others were under consideration. The Forest Service's PIT approach and data and communications network were two of the agency's own ideas that complement this effort.

[1] Throughout this publication, "1983" refers to the fiscal year from October 1, 1982, to September 30, 1983.

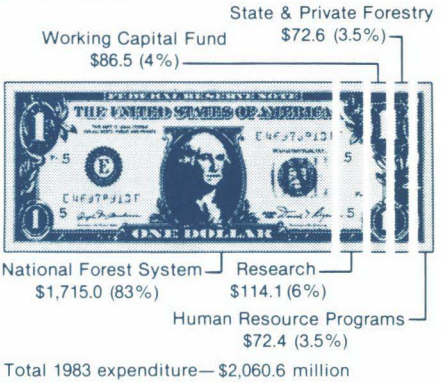
Computerized data and communications system

Distribution of Receipts by Program
(Million dollars)



Total 1983 receipts—$966.3 million

Distribution of Expenditures by Program Area
(Million dollars)



Total 1983 expenditure—$2,060.6 million

Volunteers — Another opportunity concerned a commitment to greater use of volunteers. Volunteers are another cost-effective means of helping the Nation protect and manage its natural resources. They perform valuable services for the

Forest Service. In 1983, one goal was to increase their time on the job. By increasing their stays, the value of work accomplished rose 40 percent from 1982.

An important agreement designed to increase volunteer efforts in recreation management was signed with the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC). This project enables the club to share its 106 years in cooperative recreation management experience with other organizations nationwide. The 25,000-member association already had established an outstanding record of volunteer work with the Forest Service.

The aim of the cooperative AMC program is to produce at least six long-term partnerships among land managers, volunteer groups, States, and others to plan and maintain trails, to maintain campgrounds, and to do other recreation management work.

Another highlight of this "year of the volunteer" occurred when Thomas Dibblee, 72, a Forest Service volunteer on the Los Padres National Forest, was honored by the President for volunteer work in geological and resource mapping. His work represented an estimated $500,000 value to the Government.

A new volunteer program designed specifically for 14- to 17-year old youths emerged in 1983. The Touch America Project (TAP), specifically aimed at this age group, involves local communities, private industry, and Federal agencies. The Forest Service, recognizing that it is the largest group that applies for volunteer service, provided several opportunities for work. Local organizations provided sponsors and volunteers for the projects on National Forests. Sponsors recruited volunteers and supplied transportation, materials and supplies, subsistence, and supervision. The program will be expanded in 1984.

It is fitting to mention here that 1983 also was the 50th anniversary of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), which played a large role in National Forest history. The CCC made outstanding contributions to the National Forests and the Nation's natural resources. Much of the land being added to the National Forest System half a century ago was in need of drastic rehabilitation. And, without the CCC, it might still be undone.

Some of the program's accomplishments included the planting of 2.4 billion trees, construction of 126,000 miles of roads and trails, and improvement of 21 million acres through tree planting, pest control, and disease control. Many of these accomplishments are visible even today.

Touch America Project

National Forest System

Resources — As one of its major duties, the Forest Service is charged with management and protection of National Forest System lands — one-twelfth of the United States. These lands hold valuable economic and amenity resources for current and future use and serve as the playgrounds for much of the Nation's population. It is unquestionably important, therefore, to plan the optimum use and conservation of these lands for both this and future generations. Challenges encountered this past year led to review and alteration of some Forest Service policies that will affect the way these responsibilities will be handled for many years to come.

A Federal court decision in California triggered a massive reevaluation of National Forest roadless areas that were studied 5 years ago for wilderness potential. The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals found an environmental impact statement covering 46 areas in California to be legally inadequate.

As a result, reevaluations are being incorporated into Forest management plans, which are being developed for each of 121 National Forest units. The plans are scheduled for completion in 1985. Some of the plan schedules were delayed to include the reevaluations. Others will incorporate the reevaluations without delaying release.

The up-and-down timber market of recent years led to another major policy review. A timber sale extension plan was authorized by the President. The reasoning was that high prices bid by purchasers of National Forest timber in the 1970's and the concurrent high market prices of timber were unlikely to recur. Consequently, many timber purchasers could not afford to harvest the National Forest timber they had bought and were facing default on their contracts. The prospects were bankruptcy for some and economic disaster for many communities dependent on the timber industry and its ability to process National Forest timber. The extensions, granted under certain conditions, will allow the purchasers to mix the high-cost timber they now own with lower cost timber.

The timber policy allows extensions of up to 5 years with no interest payments. However, one of the requirements is that purchasers must submit a multisale extension plan to the Forest Service. Their plan must contain an operating schedule spelling out how much timber the purchaser will harvest during each year.

In 1983, the Forest Service and other agencies adopted a more aggressive posture on grizzly bear survival. A task force, composed of representatives of several Federal agencies and the States of Idaho,

Timber sale extension plan

Montana, Washington, and Wyoming, took responsibility for implementing State and Federal efforts designed to encourage the recovery of the grizzly bear population.

The grizzly bear is listed as a threatened species in the 48 conterminous States, where it is estimated that fewer than 1,000 exist. Major parts of the program are to increase awareness of grizzly bear activity in areas frequented by humans and to relocate animals when necessary to avoid conflicts.

Greater efficiency was the key consideration in revising the popular firewood permit program. The program was revised to make it more uniform within the agency, to make it more consistent with the sale of firewood by other Government agencies and private landowners, and to make it a way to balance supply and demand. The policy generally eliminates free-use permits except in areas where the supply of readily available firewood significantly exceeds demand. The actual price charged varies from $1 per cord to more than $15 depending on demand, availability, and ease of access.

Another resource program being tailored to fit the Forest Service's efficiency campaign concerned outdoor recreation. A policy of fee increases, established in 1980, continued in 1983. The increases reflected an effort to bring fees closer to the costs of maintenance and operation and to reduce competition with the private sector. User fees for Forest Service facilities accounted for $11.3 million in 1983.

Most of the money spent by the Forest Service on recreation sites was to rehabilitate existing facilities. This policy reflects a reduction in Federal expenditures that have caused a downshift, over the past several years, in the construction of new facilities and in the level of facility maintenance. The results of this reduction included shorter lengths of time for the public operation of some facilities and longer periods between rehabilitation.

Planning — Planning is the continuing process designed to ensure the wisest and most effective use of the resources in Forest Service care. It involves National Forests individually, Regions, and the agency as a whole.

Land management planning regulations, suffering from lack of clarity, were streamlined in 1983. The new regulations are a better tool for planners and the public in creating workable, consistent plans for all of the National Forest System. Terms were simplified, sentence structure improved, and material reorganized. Public response and the assistance of the former Committee of Scientists, which helped write the original rules under terms of the National Forest Management Act, were helpful in producing the final revisions.

Individual Forest plans are the building blocks for the regional and national planning. They also are the final word on how these key units of the Forest Service will be managed. Each Forest plan is tailored to meet the best resource use of the area it encompasses and serves. It becomes a supportable blueprint for the future. As of October 1983, 21 draft and 4 final Forest plans were approved for filing with the Environmental Protection Agency. In addition, 16 drafts were approved for publication.

In addition to National Forest planning, the Forest Service relies on State forest resource plans and their supporting data and analyses. They are the primary source for State contributions to the Forest Service planning process. State data will continue to be a basis for development of the Forest Service's State and Private Forestry programs and future programs for the Resources Planning Act (RPA).

The data gathered for all the National Forest and State plans form the foundation of the comprehensive national plan required periodically by the Resources Planning Act. In 1983, the Forest Service completed the 1984 RPA Assessment Supplement. The update encompasses information gathered since the 1979 Assessment and is being used to create the 1985 RPA Program.

The Assessment, required every 10 years, provides detailed information on renewable forest and range land resources. It includes projections of future supply and demand for each of those resources and spells out potential opportunities to meet the Nation's future needs for them.

Work continued through 1983 on the draft Environmental Impact Statement for the 1985 RPA Program, based on information in the Assessment. The Program responds to the Nation's natural resources situation as it is projected in the RPA Assessment. RPA provides the long-range planning frame for Forest Service activities to help ensure that the United States has an adequate supply of renewable natural resources, while maintaining the quality of the environment.

State and Private Forestry

Another opportunity in 1983 focused on ways to help improve the use of the Nation's privately owned nonindustrial forest lands. The Forest Service worked with State governments, forestry organizations, universities, and individuals to solve problems and make the most of opportunities so future forest resources can meet public needs.

Emphasis in the 1983 cooperative effort was to provide more effective public programs that encourage more productive management of the lands.

Demand for wood products in the United States is expected to double in the next 50 years. These demands cannot be met without increasing the investment made by owners of nonindustrial forests. These owners account for 59 percent of this Nation's commercial forest lands.

To show commitment to this effort, the Forest Service developed plans for a national forum on nonindustrial, private forest lands for early fiscal year 1984. The plans reflected a desire to reach a consensus on how to increase productivity on these lands, among all segments of the forestry community.

This new emphasis involving States and private owners seemed appropriate for 1983 since it was the year of the 75th anniversary of the creation of the State and Private Forestry division in the Forest Service. This division was created as a formal entity by the first Forest Service Chief, Gifford Pinchot, in 1908. A few years later, passage of the Week's Law permitted Federal cooperation with States for fire protection of private forest land on the watersheds of navigable streams.

Forest Research

Much of the future of increased forest productivity relies on research. In 1983, increased emphasis was placed on basic research, old-growth wildlife habitat in the Pacific Northwest, integrated pest management, and international trade. Two examples were genetic engineering and enzyme isolation.

The Forest Service initiated research on genetic engineering in 1983. Such engineering can be used to increase plant growth and productivity, to improve resistance to insects and disease, and to produce selected end products, such as interferon.

Research to improve tree genetics

Initial work consisted of preparing comprehensive problem analyses and plans in two areas. The first is nonsexual methods for tree breeding, including protoplast and nuclear fusion technology. The second is individual heritable traits and recombinant DNA methodologies for transfer of genes in forest tree species.

Also in 1983, scientists at the Forest Products Laboratory in Madison, Wis., identified for the first time an enzyme active in breaking down lignin, the natural plastic that makes up 25 percent of wood. Discovery of the enzyme, along with the increased understanding of the wood decay process, may lead to biological methods for controlling decay.

Another Forest Service goal emphasized in 1983 was to encourage more of this type of research by industry. A national task force on basic research, made up of 17 scientists from all sections of the country, issued a report last year. The task force concluded that basic research in forestry and renewable natural resources is one of the most important sources of ideas for improving the quality of life in the United States. Without a larger investment in future productivity, the Nation is threatened with a deterioration of that quality of life.

In all, 1983 was a turning point for the Forest Service. The agency altered course to meet the future with new ideas and ways of doing its job. Cutting back and learning to work with less funding and workforce restrictions were no longer enough. In 1983, the time had come to develop an approach that would permit effective, efficient agency operation, while fulfilling present and future management goals in the National Forest System, in Forest Research, and in State and Private Forestry.

The next few years will continue to test Forest Service ingenuity in seeking opportunities in efficiency and effectiveness. The spirit and imagination of Forest Service employees are two reasons the future looks so promising. They provided many innovative ideas in 1983 and will undoubtedly continue to do so.

The Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, is responsible for Federal leadership in forestry. It carries out this role through four main activities:

- Protection and management of resources on 191 million acres of National Forest System lands.
- Cooperation with State and local governments, forest industries, and private landowners to help protect and manage non-Federal forest and associated range and watershed lands.
- Research on all aspects of forestry, rangeland management, and forest resources utilization.
- Participation with other agencies in human resource and community assistance programs to improve living conditions in rural areas.

1983 Statistics

Timber sold
11 billion board feet

Livestock grazed
9 million animal unit-months

National Forest System
190.8 million acres

Timber harvested
9.2 billion board feet

Human resource programs
69,933 persons served

Mineral operating plans processed
30,355

Wilderness
25.2 million acres

Permanent full-time employees
30,752

Roads maintained
321,000 miles

Woodland owners assisted
136,265

Receipts
$966 million

Wildlife and fish habitat improvements
309,829 acres

Recreation use
229 million visitor days

Expenditures
$2 billion